तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and the Ghost

From the life of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

Once when Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was opening a new center in a house that had been given for the use of the Gaudiya Mission, a ghostly incident occurred.

He was staying in a room on the second floor. One *brahmacārī* was in attendance, reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* while Srila Bhaktisiddhanta worked at his desk. That *brahmacārī* suddenly saw a bone-hand float in through the window. He cried out and fainted. When Srila Bhaktisiddhanta inquired the cause for his alarm, the *brahmacārī* told what he'd seen, but Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati didn't seem to take it as very important. He told the *brahmacārī* to chant, *"hare kṛṣṇa!"*, and not to cry unintelligibly.

Thereafter the hand again appeared and floated into the room as if to grasp the neck of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. This time the *brahmacārī* chanted, *"hare kṛṣṇa!"*, and then fainted. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati revived the *brahmacārī*, saying, "Don't faint. Chant and read *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*." When the hand came again, the *brahmacārī* did just that. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta saw the hand and chanted, *"Haribol!"*, and the hand disappeared. He then said to the *brahmacārī*, "No need to worry. That ghost is now delivered."

— From an unpublished biography on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati by Sri Srimad Bhakti Vikas Swami Maharaja.

Don't Find Fault

From the Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

para-svabhāva-karmāṇi na praśaṁsen na garhayet
viśvam ekātmakaṁ paśyan prakṛtyā puruṣeṇa ca

One should see that because of the meeting of material nature and the living entity, the universe is acting uniformly. Thus one should neither praise nor criticize the characteristics or activities of others.

— Translation of *Cc. antya* 8.78, quoting *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 11.28.1.

kṛṣṇeti yasya giri taṁ manasādriyeta
dīkṣāsti cet praṇatibhiś ca bhajantam īśam
śuśrūṣayā bhajana-vijñam ananyam anya-
nindādi-śūnya-hṛdam īpsita-saṅga-labdhyā

One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Krishna, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation [*dīkṣā*] and is engaged in worshiping the deity, and one should associate with and faithfully serve that pure devotee who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others.

— Nectar of Instruction, text 5.

Because of having insulted Dhruva Maharaja, Suruchi would become mad upon the death of her son and would enter a forest fire, and thus her life would be ended. This was specifically mentioned by the Lord to Dhruva because he

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was determined for revenge against her. From this we should take the lesson that we should never try to insult a *vaiṣṇava*. Not only should we not insult a *vaiṣṇava*, we should not insult anyone unnecessarily. When Suruchi insulted Dhruva Maharaja, he was just a child. She of course did not know that Dhruva was a greatly recognized *vaiṣṇava*, and so her offense was committed unknowingly. When one serves a *vaiṣṇava* unknowingly, one still gets the good result, and if one unknowingly insults a *vaiṣṇava*, one suffers the bad result.

— Purport to *Bhāg*. 4.9.23

It is a qualification of a *vaiṣṇava* that he is *adoṣa-darśī*, he never sees others' faults. Of course, every human being has both good qualities and faults. Therefore it is said, *sajjanā guṇam icchanti doṣam icchanti pāmarāḥ* — everyone has a combination of faults and glories. But a *vaiṣṇava*, a sober man, accepts only a man's glories and not his faults, for flies seek sores whereas honeybees seek honey.

— Purport to *Cc. ādi* 8.62

Those who are committing sins like illicit sex, fault-finding, and unjustified violence rarely attain spiritual knowledge or realization.

— *Renunciation Through Wisdom* 2.6.

Apaiśunam means that one should not find fault with others or correct them unnecessarily. Of course, to call a thief a thief is not fault-finding, but to call an honest person a thief is very much offensive for one who is making advancement in spiritual life.

— Conversation, 26 June 1976.

This is actually a devotee's business that everyone should appreciate the value of other devotees. Nobody should criticize anyone.

— Letter, 19 August 1968.

I have noted your several complaints against the devotees. But it would be better to set the example rather than to criticize the defects of the devotees. We should always remember that we recruit members from people in general. It is not expected that every one of our members should be immediately to the standard qualification. The best thing for you is to set the example by your personal behavior and try to reform the others not by criticizing but by friendly behavior.

— Letter, 14 Oct 1971.

The Only Lacking is with Us

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

We must have full faith in *sādhu-śāstra-guru*, and we must do our service. This is the material plane, and at the same time it is Kali Yuga, but you should have firm determination, patience, and should not deviate in any circumstance. Always pray to Lord Chaitanya and guru. They will help you. We are very weak, but *caitya-guru* is in our heart. He'll give you inspiration. Krishna as *paramātmā* arranges that thing. For one who is a sincere soul, who is very eager to have it, Krishna makes arrangements. He knows, "This soul wants this thing," so He makes arrangements. Our only business is to always pray to Krishna. To always cry, "Help me, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu! Help me, Guru Maharaja!" and you'll get help. Have full faith in it. Don't be desperate. We should be very eager to get it and have association of pure devotees. *Sādhu-saṅga* means to associate with a person more advanced than yourself. Then you will benefit. Otherwise, no benefit will come. It may look impossible, but still nothing is impossible for Krishna. Krishna will make the arrangement. *Vāṇī*, instructions, are there. When nothing is available, we should associate with instructions and books. Our sincere prayers will reach Krishna, and the day will come when you will meet such a person. We should always be praying, "Krishna, please help me!" Chanting Hare Krishna means the soul is crying, *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare* — "O Krishna's *śakti*, Radharani! O Krishna! Please engage me in Your service. I am fallen."

ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaraṁ
patitaṁ māṁ viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūlī-sadṛśaṁ vicintaya

"I am Your *kiṅkara*, Your servant, but somehow I've fallen in the depths of this ocean of nescience. Please shower Your mercy, take me as a particle of dust at Your lotus feet." [*Cc. antya* 20.32, *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 5]

The soul is crying. By uttering this *hari-nāma* — *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa* — the soul is crying. Chant in this way and you will get it, miraculously, unexpectedly. Nothing is impossible for Krishna. It is impossible for us, but Krishna wants that thing. The only lacking is with us.

— Evening program, Paris, 1987.

Critics take the Karma

Although most persons generally do not appreciate others' criticism of them, the Vedic literatures say

that tolerating and forgiving our critics is beneficial. Forgiving our critics is a course recommended in the Bible, the Koran and other religious traditions. Yet, what happens to the critic? The English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley has described:

> *The effects that follow the constant and intense concentration upon evil are always disastrous. Those who crusade, not for God in themselves, but against the demons in others, never succeed in making the world better.... No man can concentrate his attention on evil, or even the idea of evil, and remain unaffected. To be more against the demon than for godliness is exceedingly dangerous. Every crusader is apt to go mad. He is haunted by the wickedness that he attributes to his enemies; it becomes sort of a part of him.*

The following are some verses describing the Vedic teachings on this point:

> *para-svabhāva-karmāṇi yaḥ praśaṁsati nindati*
> *sa āśu bhraśyate svārthād asaty abhiniveśataḥ*

Whoever indulges in praising or criticizing the qualities and behavior of others will quickly become deviated from his own best interest by his entanglement in illusory dualities. (Krishna to Uddhava. *Bhāg.* 11.28.2)

> *sammānād brāhmaṇo nityam udvijeta viṣād iva*
> *amṛtasyeva cākāṅkṣed avamānasya sarvadā*
> *sukhaṁ hy avamataḥ śete sukhaṁ ca pratibudhyate*
> *sukhaṁ carati loke 'sminn avamantā vinaśyati*

Throughout his life, a *brāhmaṇa* should consider material prestige to be like poison and dishonor to be like nectar. After all, if one learns to tolerate dishonor, then his agitation will subside and he will happily sleep, happily wake, and happily move about. The person who insults him will, because of his sin, become regretful, and his happiness in this and the next life will be vanquished. (*Mānu-saṁhitā* 2.162-163. Quoted by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur in *Brāhmaṇa O Vaiṣṇava*.)

> *ākrośaparivādābhyāṁ vihiṁsanty abudhā budhān*
> *vaktā pāpam upādatte kṣamamāṇo vimucyate*

The ignorant seek to injure the wise by malice and back-biting; by doing so the critic takes upon himself the load of the wise man's sins, which he, the wise man, casts off by forgiving the ignorant. (Vidura to Dhritarastra. *Mahābhārata, udyoga parva* 34.74)

> *ākruśyamāno nākrośen manyur eva titikṣitaḥ*
> *ākroṣṭāraṁ nirdahati sukṛtaṁ cāsya vindati*

A person being criticized should not criticize in retaliation, for the pain felt upon receiving criticism, if endured, will itself consume the critic and bring in exchange the results of his good deeds. (Dattatreya to the Saddhyas. *Mahābhārata, udyoga parva* 36.5)

> *aruṣyan kruśyamānasya sukṛtaṁ nāma vindati*
> *duṣkṛtaṁ cātmano marṣī ruṣyaty evāpamārṣṭi vai*

One who remains tolerant, not becoming angry, certainly attains the abuser's pious credits. Indeed his own sins are transferred to that wrathful person. (Bhishma to Yudhisthira. *Mahābhārata śanti-parva* 115.3)

> *pratyakṣaṁ guṇavādī yaḥ parokṣaṁ tu vinindakaḥ*
> *sa mānavaḥ śvaval loke naṣṭalokaparāyaṇaḥ*

A person who praises someone in his presence, but criticizes him behind his back, is no better than a dog. His chances for elevation to higher planets are completely spoiled in this world. (Bhishma to Yudhisthira. *Mahābhārata, śanti parva* 115.11) ❁

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The Glories of Saranga Thakur

In his purport to *Cc. ādi* 10.113, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada translates the purport of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada:

> Another name of Thakur Saranga Das was Sarnga Thakur. Sometimes he was also called Sarngapani or Sarngadhara. He was a resident of Nabadwip in the neighborhood known as Modadruma-dwipa, and he used to worship the Supreme Lord in a secluded place on the bank of the Ganges. He was not accepting disciples, but he was repeatedly being inspired from within by the Supreme Personality of Godhead to do so. Thus one morning he decided, 'Whomever I see, I shall make my disciple.' When he went to the bank of the Ganges to take his bath, by chance he saw a dead body floating in the water,

and he touched it with his feet. This immediately brought the body to life, and Thakur Saranga Das accepted him as his disciple. This disciple later became famous as Thakur Murari, and his name is always associated with that of Sri Saranga. His disciplic succession still inhabits the village of Sar. There is a temple at Mamgachi that is said to have been started by Saranga Thakur. Not long ago, a new temple building was erected in front of a bakula tree there, and it is now being managed by the members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. It is said that the management of the temple is now far better than before. In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (172) it is stated that Saranga Thakur was formerly a *gopī* named Nandimukhi. Some devotees say that he was formerly Prahlad Maharaja, but Sri Kavi-karnapura says that his father, Sivananda Sen, does not accept this proposition."

Mamgachi (Jahannagar) is a small town just north of the present town of Nabadwip. There the temple of Saranga Thakur and his worshipful deities, Sri Sri Radha Gopinath, are to be found. The bakul tree mentioned in the above purport still exists. In the local tradition of Mamgachi, there is an interesting story about this tree. It is said that once while Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was visiting Saranga Thakur at Mamgachi, He saw that the bakul tree in the courtyard of Saranga's temple was dying. The Lord asked Saranga, "This bakul tree is dying, so what are you going to do?"

Saranga Thakura replied, "Besides Your mercy, Prabhu, I don't see any hope for this tree." Mahaprabhu then embraced that tree, which although hollow on the inside has remained healthy to this day and is now quite large.

A Necklace of the Holy Names

By Govinda Das

Sindhuḍā-rāga

kali timirākula akhila jīva heri
vadana-cānda parakāśa
locana-prema- sudhā-rasa-barikhaṇe
jaga-jana-tāpa vināśa

Seeing the innumerable souls lost in the darkness of Kali-yuga, Lord Chaitanya revealed His moonlike face and destroyed the sufferings of all living entities with a nectar shower of enchanting spiritual love.

gaurāṅga karuṇā-sindhu avatāra
nija-guṇe gānthiyā nāma cintāmaṇi
jaga-jane parāyali hāra

Lord Gaura, the ocean of mercy, descended to this world, and, stringing together the *cintāmaṇi* jewels of His own holy names with the thread of His loving qualities, He garlanded all the souls of this world.

bhakata-kalapa-taru antare antaru
ropali ṭhāmahiñ ṭhāma
yachu pada-tala avalamba-i panthika
pūrala nija nija kāma

Lord Gaura constructed a resting-place for the souls traveling in this world — the shade of the wish-fulfilling desire tree of His devotees. Those souls who take shelter of their feet find all their desires fulfilled.

bhāva-gajendra caḍāyala akiñcane
aichana pahuṅka vilāsa
saṁsāra-kālakūṭa viṣe tanu dagadhala
ekali govinda dāsa

The regal elephant of ecstatic spiritual love has picked up the devotees for whom Krishna is the only treasure and placed them in the Lord's pastimes. Only Govinda Das is left behind, burning in the deadly poison of birth and death.

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